

First West African nest of Grey-winged Robin Chat *Cossypha polioptera*, in Côte d'Ivoire

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Les auteurs rapportent la découverte d'un nid du Cossyphes à sourcils blancs *Cossypha polioptera nigriceps* au Parc National du Mont Sangbé, en Côte d'Ivoire de l'ouest, le 12 juin 2002. Le nid était situé à 50 cm du sol dans une fente d'un tronc d'arbre d'environ 50 cm de diamètre et consistait en une coupe assez peu profonde bordée de mousse. Il était tapissé de brins d'herbe et de fines tiges, et contenait deux œufs de couleur brun-olive. Ceci constitue la première description du nid de cette espèce en Afrique de l'Ouest. Le nid de la sous-espèce nominale a été décrit pour la première fois en Zambie en 1998.

Grey-winged Robin Chat *Cossypha polioptera* has a disjunct range in Africa, being confined to a number of widely scattered locations, from Sierra Leone and east Guinea to western Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria to western Central African Republic, south Sudan to north-west Tanzania, and in Angola and north Zambia/south Democratic Republic of Congo^{1,9,10}. Its breeding biology is poorly known^{9,10} and although the nest of the nominate race has been recently described from Zambia³, it has not yet been documented for the subspecies *nigriceps* in West Africa. The nest was found (but not described) in Uganda, in June and October, from where the eggs were described as olive-green¹⁴. The only breeding data from western Africa are from Yekepa/Nimba, north-east Liberia,

where birds in January had enlarged gonads, whereas those in October–November had much smaller gonads^{4,7}. A recently fledged juvenile was caught in March at the same location⁷. Although the species has been reported as breeding in Sierra Leone⁶ and Côte d'Ivoire¹⁵, no details have been presented.

On 12 June 2002, during avian inventory field work in Mont Sangbé National Park, western Côte d'Ivoire, HR found a nest of this species at c700 m altitude, in a forested ravine between two ridges of Mont Sangbé, on the north side of the mountain (07°55'N 07°17'W). It was identified as that of a Grey-winged Robin Chat, as an adult flew off the nest when HR passed the tree in which it was placed. The nest was 50 cm above ground within the cleft of a tree trunk, c50 cm in diameter, and consisted of a moderately shallow cup with a rim of moss. It was lined with grass and narrow plant stems, and contained two uniform olive-brown eggs (Fig 1). This compares with Charge's³ observation of three

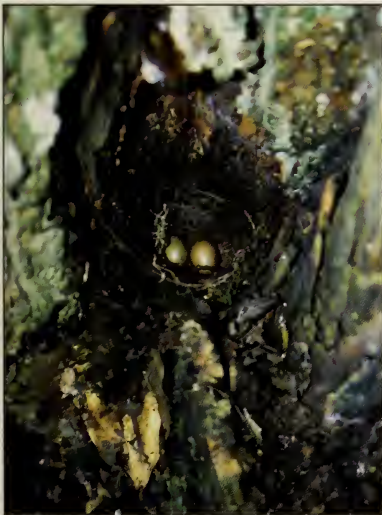


Figure 1. Nest of Grey-winged Robin Chat *Cossypha polioptera*, Mont Sangbé National Park, Côte d'Ivoire, June 2002 (Hugo Rainey)



Figure 2. Grey-winged Robin Chat *Cossypha polioptera*, Mont Sangbé National Park, Côte d'Ivoire, June 2002 (Hugo Rainey)

greenish-turquoise and slightly mottled eggs in a nest consisting of a small cup of moss lined with black vegetable fibre and located 0.5–1.0 m from the base of a sandy bank. Unfortunately no measurements of our observation were taken, as the significance of the find was unknown at the time. The wet season in this park is in June and water was plentiful. The steep-sided valley ensures that even in the dry season this area has permanent water (S Diakite pers comm). A few days before, on 9 June, an adult Grey-winged Robin Chat was trapped 10 km south of this site (07°52'N 07°20'W, also within the park), at 750 m (Fig 2). The long white supercilium meeting the rufous neck-sides identified the bird as being of the subspecies *nigriceps*, which occurs from Sierra Leone to west Cameroon^{1,11}.

These observations appear to be the most easterly of the Upper Guinea population; the previous most easterly records being from Mont Tonkouï to the south-west (07°27'N 07°39'W)^{2,13,15}, a range extension of 32 km. Other authors have commented that it is common in highland forest, its preferred habitat in Upper Guinea^{2,7,15}, and our observations suggest that this may be the case in Mont Sangbé National Park. Prior to our trapping the bird, singing individuals had been heard at two different locations at c700 m.

Mont Sangbé National Park covers 95,000 ha and consists of generally rugged terrain with many peaks above 700 m; the vegetation is mostly savanna woodland with some small patches of forest⁸. Recent surveys have noted 364 bird species in the park^{5,12} including rare and threatened species such as Hartlaub's Duck *Pteronetta hartlaubii*, Denham's Bustard *Neotis denhami*, Arabian Bustard *Ardeotis arabs*, Black-headed Bee-eater *Merops breweri*, Brown-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes cylindricus*, Yellow-casqued Hornbill *Ceratogymna elata*, Baumann's Greenbul *Phyllastrephus baumanni*, Yellow-headed Picathartes *Picathartes gymnocephalus* and Emerald Starling *Lamprolornis iris*.

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